

## Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



# CARE OF BABY CHICKS

BOYS AND GIRLS  
POULTRY  
CLUB  
WORK



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR 14

CONTRIBUTION FROM  
BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY  
ANIMAL HUSBANDRY DIVISION  
WASHINGTON, D. C.



## CARE OF BABY CHICKS.

---

**T**HE CARE of baby chicks is most important. They must be kept warm and comfortable, have proper feed and water, and be carefully watched to detect any indications of sickness and disease that may appear, if they are to get the necessary start in life to enable them to grow and develop into large, hardy chicks and mature fowls.

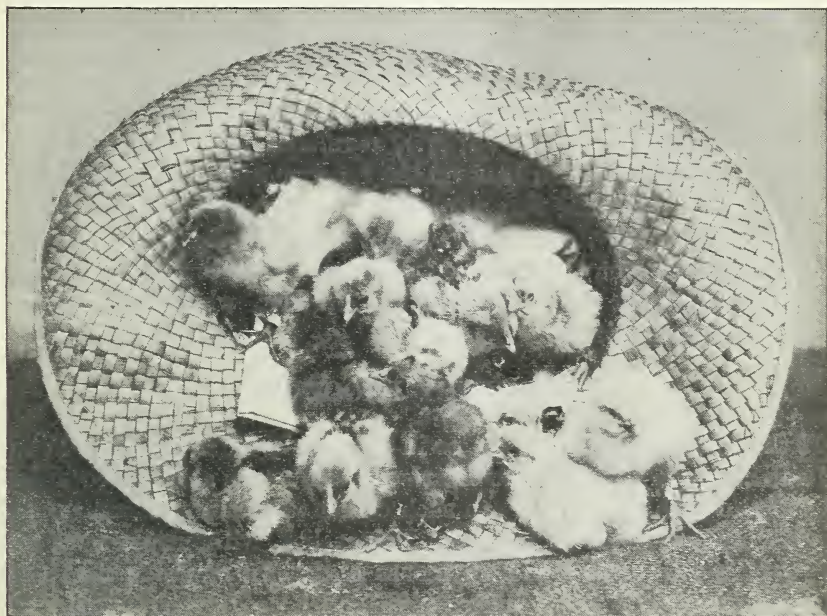


FIG. 1.—A "hatfull" of baby chicks just taken from the nest. They were less than 24 hours old when the picture was taken, and only a few are thoroughly awake.

### WHEN TO TAKE FROM NEST.

Most boys and girls set eggs and hatch their chicks under hens, which is the best way unless a very large number of chicks is wanted, in which case an incubator is sometimes used. When the mother hen is hatching she should not be disturbed except to remove the shells, unless she becomes uneasy and steps on or picks the chickens. In



such cases the chickens should be removed as soon as dry. Place them in a basket or box lined with flannel or some other soft material and cover the top, keeping the basket in a warm place until the remaining eggs left under the hen are hatched.

### KEEP THE CHICKS WARM.

Every poultry-club member should always bear in mind that newly hatched chicks are delicate little fellows and must be treated with care. They hatch in a temperature of 102° to 105° F. and their first and most important requirement for the next 48 hours or more is warmth. As soon as the chicks have been taken from the nest or incubator and placed in the brood coop with the mother hen, or in the brooder, they must be kept warm and comfortable until they are old and strong enough to run about and withstand the changes of weather.

When brooded by hens they remain under the mother of their own accord nearly all the time for the first two or three days. If they are to be reared in a brooder, the brooder should be warmed to the proper temperature (about 95° F.), regulated and made ready in advance. Never wait and heat up the brooder after the chicks have been put in. This same rule applies if you purchase day-old chicks instead of hatching them. Always have the brooder ready so that when they reach you they can be transferred at once from the shipping box in which they arrive to the brooder, where it is warm, roomy, and comfortable.

### EMERGENCY BROODER.

If the mother hen should die or in case the brooder is ordered and fails to arrive in time, boys and girls are sometimes at a loss to know what to do with the chicks. In such case a temporary or homemade brooder may be made as follows: Take a box, without cover, about 18 to 24 inches square and 10 inches high. In one side next the bottom cut an opening 3 inches high and 8 or 10 inches long for the chicks to pass through. Protect this opening with a strip of woollen cloth; tack at the upper edge, having perpendicular slits cut from the lower edge to within one-half inch of the top to allow the chicks to pass through. This box covered over the top with a heavy blanket or any warm cloth may be used without heat when the room temperature where the brooder is located is 70° F. or over. If the temperature is lower, however, or the chicks appear to be cold, take a large bottle or jug and fill with hot water and place inside the box, refilling it as often as necessary to keep the chicks warm and comfortable.

## FEEDING BABY CHICKS.

Baby chicks should not be fed for from 24 to 36 hours after hatching, and will not suffer if given no feed until the third day. The yolk of the egg which is absorbed by the chick when hatching furnishes all the nourishment required during that time. After the third day they should be fed four or five times daily for the first week or ten days, but only a small amount at a time. Chicks will grow faster if fed four or five times daily than by feeding three times daily, but they should be given only what they will eat up clean each time. Overfeeding will do more harm than underfeeding; therefore care should be exercised and only a sufficient amount given each time to satisfy their hunger and keep them exercising.

The first feed should consist of johnnycake or hard-boiled eggs, mixed with stale-bread crumbs or pinhead oatmeal, using a sufficient amount of the latter to make a dry, crumbly mixture. These feeds or combinations of feeds may be used with good results for the first week; then gradually substitute for one or two feeds daily a mixture of equal parts of finely cracked wheat, cracked corn, and pinhead oatmeal or hulled oats, to which may be added a small quantity of broken rice, millet, rapeseed, and charcoal if obtainable. This mixture makes an ideal ration. If corn can not be had, cracked kafir corn, rolled or hulled barley may be substituted. A commercial chick feed containing a variety of grains may be used instead if desired, and can be bought from most feed dealers.

*How to make johnnycake.*

Corn meal.....	5 pounds
Infertile eggs (tested out from sittings or from an incubator) .....	6
Baking soda.....	1 tablespoon

Mix with milk to make a stiff batter, and bake thoroughly.

NOTE.—When infertile eggs are not available use a double quantity of baking soda and add one-half pound of sifted beef scrap.

When the chicks are from 10 days to two weeks old a dry growing mash composed of the following should be given:

- 2 parts, by weight, of bran.
- 2 parts middlings.
- 1 part corn meal.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  part or 10 per cent sifted meat scrap.

When the chickens are 8 or 10 weeks old add 1 part of ground oats and increase the meat scrap to 1 part.

This mash may be placed in a hopper, where it will not be wasted, and left before the chicks at all times.

As soon as the chickens are old enough and will eat whole wheat, cracked corn, or other grains, the small-sized chick feed may be discontinued and the larger-sized grains fed instead. In addition to the grain feed they must be supplied with grit, oyster shell, and charcoal at all times, and the better way is to place these in a hopper,



FIG. 2.—A newly hatched family of baby chicks about to be put into the brood coop with the mother hen and receive their first feed.

hanging it in a convenient place where the chicks may help themselves. If chicks are kept in confinement they must be furnished a liberal supply of tender, green feed, like lawn clippings, lettuce leaves, and such other things as may be available.

Whenever possible, however, chicks should be given grass range, when they will supply their own green feed, catch bugs, worms, etc. Chicks that are allowed to run on a grass range are usually



strong and thrifty and will grow much more rapidly than those that are kept in confinement. In addition to other feeds the chickens' growth may be hastened considerably by giving them sour milk to drink. Chickens are very fond of milk in any form and will eat and drink a liberal supply of it. It may be fed either sweet or sour, but the latter is more desirable. Sour milk will help to keep chickens healthy and is one of the best things that can be fed to promote rapid growth and development. When milk is fed, the amount of meat scrap in the mash may be reduced one-half.

## FARMERS' BULLETINS ON POULTRY RAISING

- 287. Poultry Management.
- 528. Hints to Poultry Raisers.
- 574. Poultry House Construction.
- 585. Natural and Artificial Incubation of Hens' Eggs.
- 624. Natural and Artificial Brooding of Chickens.
- 682. A Simple Trap Nest for Poultry.
- 656. The Community Egg Circle.
- 684. Squab Raising.
- 697. Duck Raising.
- 767. Goose Raising.
- 791. Turkey Raising.
- 801. Mites and Lice on Poultry.
- 806. Standard Varieties of Chickens: I. The American Class.
- 830. Shipping Eggs by Parcel Post.
- 849. Capons and Caponizing.
- 858. The Guinea Fowl.
- 889. Back-Yard Poultry Keeping.
- 898. Standard Varieties of Chickens: II. The Mediterranean and Continental Classes.
- 957. Important Poultry Diseases.
- 1040. Illustrated Poultry Primer.
- 1052. Standard Varieties of Chickens: III. The Asiatic, English, and French Classes.
- 1067. Feeding Hens for Egg Production.
- Bureau of Chemistry Circular 61, revised, How to Kill and Bleed Market Poultry.

For copies of these bulletins or further information on poultry raising, write to your poultry-club leader, or to the Animal Husbandry Division, Bureau of Animal Industry,

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

### ADDITIONAL COPIES

OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE PROCURED FROM  
THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

AT  
5 CENTS PER COPY



